

Immunization Registry Progress in Minnesota

Immunization Coverage in Minnesota

According to the National Immunization Survey (NIS), the percentage of children 19-35 months of age who were up-to-date with 4 doses of diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, 3 doses of poliomyelitis, and 1 dose of measles, mumps, rubella vaccine was 82%. Although encouraging from a statewide perspective, this means that almost one in every five children is not adequately immunized.

“Pockets of need” exist throughout the state in both urban and rural areas. Many geographic areas with the lowest immunization rates are also the poorest.

Facts about Minnesota's Registry

State and local health departments have identified immunization registries as an important strategy to improve childhood immunization rates, particularly given the number of families who change residence or health care providers. Almost all (82 of 87) counties are planning for or have developed registries. A large number of counties are currently collaborating on regional community registries to most efficiently use available resources. Registries also support parental responsibility by providing reminders to parents to make appointments with their clinic or physician.

Other unique qualities about Minnesota's Registry

Immunization registries in Minnesota truly are community based. They are designed and built at the local level by community consortia who see registries as a critical strategy to improve immunization levels and prevent disease in children and adults. These registries are designed to meet local needs but have voluntarily adopted state standards for data collection and exchange, notification to parents, and data privacy. The model for immunization registries in Minnesota is not a top down, state government-controlled model, but rather one of locally controlled and collaborative initiatives. Community immunization registries support the Governor's principles of responsive and accountable government working in innovative partnerships with the private sector.

Other registry plans, accomplishments, and successes

There has been broad support and active involvement of many sectors (providers, schools, public health, health plans) since 1994. That support and public/private partnership remains strong today. One Minnesota registry, the Southwest Minnesota Immunization Information System (SIIS), which includes 21 counties, is one of 16 national All Kids Count II grant recipients. Receiving this grant support means SIIS is one of the best registries in the country. The use of information from this registry to help control an outbreak of whooping cough (pertussis) was recently recognized at a national conference.

Minnesota has also developed statewide standards to ensure that parents' rights and individual privacy are not violated. These standards include limited access only to authorized individuals (such as the child's physician or school nurse), legal penalties for unauthorized access to registry information, notification of parents about the existence of registries and their purpose, and the right of parents to refuse participation in the registry. Currently, few refuse.

Some challenges and barriers affecting registry progress

The biggest challenge to registry development throughout the state is adequate and sustained funding. Stable core dollars are desperately needed for local public health to continue managing these collaborative registries. Many registries are at risk of losing the progress they've made to date due to inadequate funding. The Minnesota Department of Health estimates the annual cost of enrolling all 390,000 Minnesota preschool children in fully operational registries (approximately \$1,950,000), or \$5 per child, would be more than offset by the financial benefits, including prevention of disease and hospitalization, avoidance of unnecessary shots because immunization records are not always available to providers, and avoiding administrative expenses to schools and clinics in trying to identify whether a child is up to date on recommended immunizations. For example, one study estimated that a registry could identify a child's immunization status at one-fourth the cost of manually pulling the record.

Current political or legislative factors affecting registry activity

Currently there is no dedicated Federal or state funding for immunization registries. The Minnesota Department of Health is working with the Department of Human Services, private health plans, local public health, and others in both the public and private sector on a reasonable cost sharing proposal. During the early stages of registry development in Minnesota, questions were raised by some legislators about data privacy issues. The concerns about confidentiality, limited access by authorized persons, and the rights of parents to refuse participation in registries have been addressed.

Helpful immunization and immunization registry contacts in Minnesota

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